602 783 that is, sixteen. This fact qualifies him, by his gesture of purification and through his essential role as provider of sustenance, to restore the seeds that had left the guilty man's collarbone. If the offense is slight, the offender gives him millet, money, or an object. The wounded animal's nyama settles on the object, and the senãnku who receives it rids him of it without being affected himself. If the offense is more serious, the two allies go off together to a road intersection, dangu; then the senãnku takes a straw torch in the shape of a cross and circles the guilty man's head with it from left to right. The being who has been offended by the broken taboo can refuse nothing when confronted with this procedure. He removes the nyama he had inflicted and the man, powerfully aided by the forces of the purifying agent, recovers those he had lost, as symbolized by the seeds in his collarbone.

This cathartic role of reinstating subsistence forces into the human body is illustrated in daily life by the food prestations to which the partners are held. This is like the secular and materialistic representation of an invisible operation of purification.

The Person: Exceptional Cases

000 Certain physical peculiarities constitute the manifest evidence of a modification of the elements making up the person. It is appropriate here to examine the cases of individuals who are thus affected.

Twins

●845 Twins, flani (literally, two little ones), are two new beings given to men by Faro and considered as his offspring alone. Because of this fact, twins inherit neither the ni nor the dya of a dead person, but they inherit new principles which come to them from the spirit. Moreover, their dya never leaves the water for the shadow, but remains in the hands of the spirit throughout their entire life. Because of this they are protected from all danger and from all impurity.

[201] Such a birth is considered a blessing and is granted only to certain privileged people called kunandi. It is announced by holding up the right and left forefingers without uttering a word, for its announcement would be so powerful that it would harm the newborn. Their mother wraps a white cotton band called dyãla about her forehead to indicate the presence of the children's dya /86/ in Faro's hands.

845 [431] Everyone visits the parents' home and takes to them what gifts one can give for to give to twins is equivalent to giving to Faro.

845 553 851 The name-giving ceremony is carried out on the river bank if the village is situated close to the Niger, or otherwise on the edge of a pond. The children are brought by their parents who, between them, represent the number seven. They are bathed, their hair shaved off and thrown into the river, while the father says: "Mother Faro, your sons are born, here is their hair." (1) He then gives the cotton band,

1. Ba faro i wolo dew kunsi ye nin ye.

dyala, which was worn by the mother to the officiant who encircles the child's forehead with it while saying: "These two people are older than I am; let the nyama of the name which is to be given them leave with the dyala." (2) Then he gives them a special name. (3)

2. Nin ma fla ka koro u ma, u čua dali nyama ka ta fini disa fẽw dyala fe.

[177] 3. Séni and Sinè for boys; Bintou and Wasa for girls. Among the Islamized Bambara this custom is also respected; the names given are always Alassan and Fouséni. This is most likely a distortion of the Arab names given to twins in Morocco.

845 851 The next day, carrying one of the children and accompanied by a woman in charge of the other, the mother goes begging for millet or cotton in the village. She holds two identical spoon gourds in her hands. The gifts, equal in weight and quality, symbolize the twins; they are placed on the spoons. Then crossing her hands, the woman pours them into the basket in which she carries the gifts (4).

4. All the symbolism of gifts made to twins, like that of the double pot (see below), confirms observations made in the Sudan on the relationships between gifts and trade. On this subject, see M. Griaule, Dieu d'eau, pp. 234 ff. It is interesting to note here that

845 851 each twin is the dya of the other and that this term means "shadow of the body," "spiritual double," as well as "balance." To trade is dyago.

845 301 [531] Three or four days after the name-giving ceremony, depending on their sex, the twins are given bracelets of white metal representing their dya. Geometrical symbols of the universe, the sky and the earth, are engraved on each of these (1). The opening of the bracelet repre-

1. This figure is formed by a rectangle divided into two equal superposed squares, including a multiplication sign in the lower square to represent the earth, and an open v in the upper square to represent the sky.

sents that of the incomplete terrestrial world. When the twins die [766] they will be buried with the bracelets closed over their arms or their ankles to signify that they have penetrated a complete and closed world. Formerly the sacrifices to Faro were carried out with ornaments 845 borrowed from a twin. The person making the sacrifice presented 301 them to the /87/ river while saying: "The iron of the twins is witness 782 to the sacrifice offered to Faro." (2) After the ceremony, everyone

2. Flani neke ye ma ɛ̌ere ye faro sõni la.

gave white kola nuts to the twin; the interested party then went to the village square and waved in the air his arms bedecked with ornaments to spread to the four cardinal points Faro's beneficial nyama acquired in the course of the sacrifice. In certain areas twins wear a pendant in the shape of double slave fetters, called dyõ neke, "irons of the captive," or an amulet called sinzin, "support," composed of a little piece of wood carved in the shape of a double cup and preferably made by a Bozo. A man who has had twins three times [778] must acquire a double pot which is always kept full of water and which becomes the object of an annual sacrifice (3).

3. See p. 124, n. 1.

845 Up to the time they are twelve, the children bathe themselves preferably in the Niger. They supposedly can walk on water and never run the risk of drowning.

The twins do not become separated from each other any more than the dya is separated from the living being to which it is attached. They wear the same clothes and eat the same food simultaneously. Formerly male twins married the same woman. If one of them dies 845 at an early age, the blacksmith carves a small wooden doll called 778 flanitokele, which takes the name of the deceased and which the mother puts on the mat next to the living child. The latter takes this doll with him at the time of his circumcision and keeps it during the period of his seclusion in order to bring it back to the parental home whence it is never removed. When he marries, he sticks the doll into the earth along with another piece of wood symbolizing the wife of the deceased. Since twins are in a sense a living replica of Faro, none can bother them without showing disrespect to him. On the other hand, they are the object of attention and precaution on the part of their family as well as their neighbors. Their presence is always beneficial. Considered invulnerable, twins used to march ahead of [728] troops in times of war and would serve as inviolable intermediaries between the warring parties during truce.

The Hermaphrodite

826 The hermaphrodite, being both male and female, is to all extent and purpose his own twin. Consequently, he has no dya (1).

[825 304] 1. The hyena is considered a hermaphrodite; it can engender or conceive, depending on its size and strength, "the stronger impregnating the weaker." A tattooing system is based upon this belief.

/88/ The Albino

[143] Albinos of light or reddish skin and red hair are called gombele or yepege, this latter term being reserved for those who show the most accentuated characteristics.

826 The albino is supposedly born of sexual relations which took place 833 in the middle of the day when the sun is in the koblenkaba, sky of

769 At an annual ceremony presided over by the Komo, the members assemble in honor of thedead. It is called su sɔ sibiri, "Saturday of the sacrifice to the dead" and is celebrated on a Saturday at the time when the ears are being formed in the millet fields.

The kotigi removes the ancestral tools from their shelter and carries them to the graves. Then the chief of the Komo and his assistants, accompanied by the maskers, carry the altars to the cemetery while singing. Each grave is put for a moment into contact with the nimara boli and the nyama boli; the exuviae of the souls of the dead each visit the bodies they once animated. To the rhythm su bara, "rhythm of the dead," played on the drums, the maskers dance and sing around the graves while mock labor is carried out with each of the ancestral tools. During the whole ceremony the kinsmen wail, the men near the graves and the women in the house. A victim is sacrificed, cut up, and cooked in new pots which are broken after they have been used in order to avoid the contagion of the nyama of the dead. The dances of the maskers are performed during the two days that follow. In some villages the ceremony is repeated after the harvest has been threshed.

Exceptional Cases

The Stillborn

845 783 It is said of a stillborn child that he has lost both his soul and his double, that is to say, his complete being. The parents who are responsible to Faro for this disaster are obliged to find and recapture the spiritual elements of their child, the woman the soul, and the man the double, in the course of long and sometimes painful rituals.

As soon as the woman is able to go out after the birth, both parents are led, shaved and naked, before the members of the family assembled in the courtyard. As testimony /197/ of the deceased to Faro, their hair, mixed with that of the child, is buried in the wall of their home. Then a tomato, representing the foetus, is introduced into [824] a large incision made in the woman's thigh. The man crouches and drinks the juice which drips from the fruit and which symbolizes the double. Each one bows before the elders of the family, holding their hands behind their backs, to apologize for the fault committed, saying: "Here is my humiliated (sex) behind me" (1).

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1. A ngari ko le ye ngo (ngari is a word of the archaic language which expresses submission.)

Each person responds by striking their genital organs with the little finger: "It is well humiliated" (2).

[826]

2. A ngari ko karu. The little finger is the symbol of the whole person; to strike with it is to acquiesce with all one's being.

They are led to the door of their home where the village elders of both sexes are gathered; they repeat their apologies to which the same response is given, accompanied by the same gesture of acquiescence.

[304] The chief of the Komo and three elders of his age grade who have never broken any taboos led them to the river bank where they undergo a new circumcision for the man and a new excision for the woman; the blood which is a gift to Faro must fall into the water. This operation is called "purification of the foreskin" (yiriyiri tige) and the pain suffered has an expiatory value.

The sixth day after the operation the members, gathered on the village square (3), dance and sing to the rhythm of the Komo, which

3. This ceremony, called daworo is comparable to that celebrated on the sixth day after circumcision.

is furiously beaten out, in the following words:

"Circumcised children, it is not good to break the taboo of the anus. I am telling you, Soma and members of the society, do not count their faults. Faro "(ter) (4).

4. (I ye ye) boloko dew tne tyẽ mañi boda la; nye fo aw ye somaw moko ka na jigi u la; faro (ter). That is to say, "forgive them." The word anus here replaces the word genitals which, according to propriety, is not spoken.

[195]

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The parents are led to the square and turn, open-mouthed, around the circle of dancers, seeking to recapture the soul and the double of their child who is present during the ceremony, attracted by the rhythm and visible to them alone. They turn and dance until they fall into a sort of trance called "fainting of the Komo" during which the soul and the double enter them. If the entrance occurs through the mouth, they cease their cries; if it is through the nose, they appear to smother; if by the eyes, their tears run.

/198/ The rhythm then becomes progressively fainter. Soon it is only a murmur. In order not to interrupt the action, in order that the double and the soul may penetrate gently the stretched out bodies, the murmur decreases further to die out gradually. The drummers' sticks alone beat the air in silence, performing the rhythm called "the drum of the soul" (ni dunu foli). With mouths shut so as not to frighten the invisible, the participants softly drone out a song, ni bonye, which calms the soul and incites it to penetrate the two suffering parents. The latter, accompanied by the musicians, are led back home. They are beaten with sticks so that the spiritual principles may not leave them while that which has just been accomplished is proclaimed in a loud voice as well as the shame and suffering voluntarily submitted to. They are then fanned for the "repose of the child's soul."

The following day, the chief of the Komo and his age grade go to the cemetery to remove the bones of the stillborn child. They place them on the ground, examine them in the open, and dance around them to the rhythm of "the drum of the bones" (kolo dunu) while singing:

"White bones, you, dead ones! I have come to see you" (1). Then

1. Kolo dyew aw ǰu ne nǰa na bo ye.

the grave is once more closed over them.

The man and the woman are then called to the field of the dead (ǰu foro) to swear an oath. While their mouths are full of rain water or water from the Niger, a participant in the ceremony leans over and, "to heat the liquid with the strength of words," recites the following prayer under their chins:

"Kill me if I do it twice: good or bad, chance comes from several places. Faro" (ter) (2).

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2. Ni nya ke ɣyẽ fla i ka n fa; ka kadi ka kago, gariseke bo fã ka ɣã; faro (ter).

The water swallowed after these words constitutes a solemn promise to Faro not to repeat the fault.

Next, they are carried home, the man by two members of the society and the woman by three of her companions, so that their toes, [824] the temporary lodging places of the spiritual principles which have returned to them, may not touch the impure earth. They remain three and four days, respectively, on their mats without making a movement. On the seventeenth day, with a thousand precautions, they may resume a more normal life, but they will be entirely free only when a birth occurring in the family will eliminate from their bodies the soul and the double of the dead child by transferring these to the newborn.

/199/ Death of an Uncircumcised Boy

763 When an uncircumcised boy is seriously ill the chief of the ndomo (1) has a rooster sacrificed in order to find out if recovery is possible.

1. See p. 222.

In the case of a negative response the children, taking turns night and day, go into the bush and sound off the ritual objects under the leadership of an initiate. In this way the soul of the dying boy is certain to be captured at the moment of death and channeled by the sound wave and led into the ritual objects themselves. Two initiates are posted near the home of the sick and, as soon as they learn of his death, they go to warn the children in the bush to make them stop playing. The chief sits down facing the west and recites a prayer; then he sacrifices the victims offered by the family.

766 Before the corpse is buried, it is circumcised, and the wanzo goes [304] to settle in the mask of the ndomo. During the night following the burial the members go to the fresh grave and sound the ritual instruments which contain the soul. Each year they repeat this action above the children's graves following the threshing of the harvest to "awaken the dead and to tell them that their souls are not lost."

[103]

History of the Empire of Kaarta

The Descendants of Nya Ngolo

*173 Sounsan (1). When Sounsan and his people had crossed

[551] [845]

1. As we shall see, the given name marks some event connected with the person's birth. It is common practice, when the delivery is difficult, to hang a rabbit's foot at the mother's side, hence the name Sounsan ("rabbit" in Bambara). The name Péné, used elsewhere, has the same etymology.

*173 564

Sounsan is said to have practiced the saddle-maker's trade at Kounando. It is told how one day he went with a kulé (a native carpenter) into the country to get some wood needed for a saddle. At one point the two became separated. The kulé found some honey and ate it, only to be taken sick. He threw up the honey on some stones and then went away. Soon after, Sounsan passed the spot and, seeing the honey, picked it up and ate it. When, on his way back, he learned how the honey happened to be there, he was so disgusted and cursed the kulé so roundly that, since that time, none of his people can touch a kulé with impunity. All members of that caste are thus tne (taboo) for that branch of the Kouloubali.

*173 the Niger with the help of the poyon', they proceeded in the direction of Lamballaré (2). There, at the village of Darigo, Sounsan

[103]

2. In the Soninké language, this is the name of the region watered by a swamp

771 In any case, these are questions which he does not ask or which, at least, he has not considered in any way that would cause him to make logical, even if fragmentary, syntheses. His words and his acts are indications and sometimes even guide-posts for us, but how uncertain and misleading they can be! And, in the observation of current facts, how many at least seeming contradictions there are! However, in the main, the analysis given in the paragraphs above represents the basis of Bambara dogma, since everything happens in reality as if the Bambara were living in accordance with these principles.

761 That being the case, life results from the union of the two parts of the body, while death is a result of their separation. 772 Whence come these two elements and who it is that decides upon their union? No answer is possible. The Bambara say, merely, that certain persons are reincarnations. Precautions [844] taken during pregnancy and delivery show that childbirth is one of those mysteries against which taboos must be observed as a protection. The frequent and readily believed stories about [845] women giving birth to monsters -- usually animals -- bear witness to the affinities which, in the minds of the Bambara, exist between all creatures. But nothing specific is said about what precedes and determines the birth of a child.

562 This is a secret to which the Bambara are, of course, 778 not indifferent. It is evidenced in the fact that women, through whom man comes into the world, are held to be doubtful creatures, at the very least, partly because of menstruation, which makes a woman impure, and partly because of the mysterious travail she endures during the delivery of a child (1).

[774]

1. Women are also susceptible of being possessed continuously by a spirit (see the story of the Déni-bo Ba, p. 123). That is why, when a woman is several times widowed, she is suspected of being possessed by a jealous spirit who kills off her husbands. She is often even thought to be herself a sorceress.

843 A Bambara has no very exact idea of the duration of pregnancy. His deductions, based on appearances alone, lead him to believe that a child born completely formed must have been in the mother's womb longer than one less well-formed.

[845] Besides, it is believed that conception may be due to some spirit who had relations with the woman (1). Children born with some

1. See above, in the chronicle of Kaarta, the tale about Deni-ba Bo, who had relations with a mabo woman who claimed a connection with a spirit in the form of a horse.

strange or abnormal characteristics are thought to be the result of such affairs, and the fact that some women give birth only to stillborn infants is attributed to the same cause.

The pregnant woman is advised to go about her domestic chores up to the very moment of [210] her confinement and, in particular, to continue to grind grain, no doubt to facilitate labor, especially for those who are mothers for the first time.

844 When the labor pains begin, the woman retires to her hut, accompanied by matrons famed for their experience in these matters. Men, including the husband, may not come near the patient.

845 If there is a breach presentation or any other complication, the women do what they can, based on their personal experience, the inspiration of the moment, or the current superstitions. As a last resort they call in the magician or the marabout, which amounts to the same thing. Neither one is allowed to see the patient, but must work from the outside, using magic passes, incantations, or prayers and prescribing suitable remedies.

844 To deliver the baby, the mother ordinarily squats with her hands behind her head or kneels with her hands against the wall. The eldest or most skillful of the attending matrons ties the umbilical cord and then cuts it. This operation is often badly done and causes the umbilical hernia with which so many natives are afflicted and which is regarded, indeed, as a deformation in

551 more often, called sagi, "the one who has come back." A woman who was barren for a long time gives her child the name of the agent to whom she attributes the cessation of her sterility: Nyana-m-ba, "the great nyana"; Mori-ba, "the great marabout," etc. She does the same thing if she has triumphed over some evil spirit through the aid of some such intermediary, but in that case it is usual to abandon the child at birth; a substitute mother will rescue it. This is a "castoff" child (fili), and from this comes his name, Fili. Such a child may be named for the place where it was abandoned, Sunkun', "refuse heap," for instance, or for his rescuer, Numuke, "blacksmith," or Dyelike, "griot." A child who survives after a series of stillbirths is regarded as the incarnation of an evil spirit finally defeated, and the spirit in question is, so to speak, stigmatized by having the child called Malo-bali, "shameless," or Tuantan', "anonymous." The tua is often merely the name of the month, day, or season of birth: Tenen' "Monday"; Sunkalo, "month of Ramadan"; Sama, "winter season." Twins are both called Fune, literally, [845] "alike," but they are sometimes purposely differentiated by calling one of them Sio and the other Sie-koro (1); if the twins are

1. See Humblot.

girls, they are called Wassa and Bafune (1) [Ed., footnote above]. In the Bani area, the next child born after twins is called Konimba (1) [Ed., footnote above]. A child born when it had appeared that the mother would have no more children is called Kosa (1) [Ed., foot note above], literally, "business completed." There are families [214] who always use the same name for the eldest sons. Among the Massa-si at one period this name was Bo (1) from which come: Musu-kura Bo; Sira Bo, etc. (meaning

1. Bo is etymologically the same as Ngolo.

"Bo, whose mother was Musu-kura"; "Bo, whose mother was named Sira"; etc.). In Ségou the Kouloubali likewise adopted

428 3. and 4. as above for the head of the family; 5. oldest full brother; 6. oldest half-brother on father's side; 7. the family; 8. the village; 9. the Fama ... Married women may transmit personal property in the following order: 1. her oldest son; 2. her husband's oldest son by another wife; 3. the husband; 4. the woman's family ... [587] At the death of her [73] husband, a woman is not required to marry his heir ." (1)

1. Ortoli, Coutume bambara (cercle de Bamako) [Bambara Customs (Bamako Circle)].

851 We should explain here the notion of seniority which is not always easy to distinguish in a polygamous society. As a matter of fact, when two wives of the same husband bear children at roughly the same time, an intermediary announces the births to the fa, and the first baby to be announced is considered to be the oldest. It may even happen that the first one to be announced is in fact the last-born; he nevertheless remains the senior. In the case of twins, the senior [845] is the one brought forth last, for it is thought that twins are not conceived at the same time, and that the last-born is the one first conceived. [551] Certain special names are used for the oldest children: N'tyi for boys, Nya or Nyɛlɛ for girls.

643 At the Fama's death, several lines of succession are involved: that of his own family, that of the family community, and that of the patriarchy.

As far as election to the title of Fama is concerned, we have seen how the new Fama was the senior male of the same generation and same family as the deceased Fama, or the eldest of the following generation. It is noteworthy that in the case of no male heir, the succession passes to the Fama's daughter whose husband governs in her name; but that is an exceptional case.

643 When the new Fama is designated by the notables, he occupies the fortified residence of the previous Fama, where the found-
644 ing ancestor is buried; the women and children of the deceased Fama must leave these premises. While his father lived, the Fama's eldest son led a luxurious and independent life; he often commanded an important dugu, sometimes founded by himself. At his father's death, he is a very important person for the new Fama.

852 with water added (to recall the victory of Faro over Mousso Koroni). The patriarch shakes the family pembélé three or four times over the infant's head to give him the nyama of the recently deceased whose ni and dya he has inherited. Then he places the altar (kere la boli ni) on the infant's chest three times, after having recited a prayer. He cuts the throat of a red cock, dips his index finger in the blood, and traces three or four crosses on the newborn's forehead, who be-
553 comes boli din. The name is given the eighth day by the Komo chief
[431] under the doubalé, where the old people assemble. The father offers 100 kola nuts, two jars of millet beer, plus a ram whose throat is cut, and money for the griot. Part of the baby's hair is shaved off and kept in [90] a case (sebe); another part of the hair is thrown in the river as a sacrifice to Faro. The eldest of the old men examines the roots of the infant's hair and the conjunction of the eyebrows, thus determining its character (téré). Then he swings the baby seven times in an east-west direction and eight times north-south, giving him the first name of the deceased ancestor and, at the same time, his spiritual principles. The griot recite the father's mottoes, the sénanku come to joke with the baby, and the blacksmith traces the scarifications.

845 Twins. We have seen the belief that in the beginning twins were always born, and Faro subsequently punished man by abolishing double births which he no longer accords except to certain privileged persons. For the Bambara, twins are new beings who inherit neither the ni nor the dya of any ancestor. Special rites are observed at their
[201] birth which is announced by showing the raised right and left index fingers, without saying anything, for the proclamation would be so powerful that it would be harmful to the newborn twins (see G. Dieterlen, Essai sur la religion bambara [Essay on Bambara Religion].
553 The rite of name-giving is carried out on the bank of the river. The following day, accompanied by another woman, the mother goes in search of millet and cotton which she gathers in identical calabash ladles. Equal gifts are put in the ladles, which the mother presents
[301] in crossed hands. Later, the twins are fitted with metal bracelets representing their dya, and, in certain regions, with a pendant in the form of double slave irons. The twins always stay together; they
856 wear identical clothes. If one dies in early infancy, the mother places on the mat beside the surviving infant a small doll made by

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the blacksmith. The doll is given the name of the dead infant, the
[304 child carries it with him to the circumcision, and, when he marries,
585] he buries the doll with a piece of wood representing the wife of the deceased.

845 Twins are replicas of Faro, their presence is beneficial, and they are considered invulnerable.

826 The albino is supposed to be the issue of sexual relations held
833 in sunlight, a breach of taboo. He, too, is a new being. His wanzo
904 is so active that the circumciser must take great precautions before operating on it.

826 He is considered to be endowed with special powers which
782 make him a choice victim for the sacrifices offered to the spirit of the water.

553 To the children of blacksmiths, the name is given near the
326 paternal forge in the presence of all the artisans. An old man prepares seven little sticks, giving each the name of an ancestor. Three of these are drawn at random from the group, and the third gives the name of the baby. The head of the baby is rubbed with the axe Kongobwona, and his shaved hair is soaked in sacrificial blood.

553 In the Bamako region two chickens or a sheep are sacrificed
782 to celebrate the name-giving. The distribution of the meat is made according to established custom. If it is a chicken, the patriarch receives the head and the gizzard, while the wing and white meat go to the old woman who washed the baby during the first eight days. If it is a sheep, the patriarch receives [91] the ribs (because they are a bulwark, and the patriarch is the defender of the village) and the heart; the blacksmith receives the shoulder; the infant's family gets the head (so that the infant will go ahead), the back (symbol of prosperity), and the limbs (supports one wishes the new-born to have); the blood which runs on the ground is destined for the infant's protective ancestors. Then the family divides the raw meat with the heads of family, and the old woman thus receives her part indirectly.

c. Circumcision

881 A male infant is born, but he still keeps (because of the
304 primordial twinship) the prepuce as the physical support of the female
831 sex. He will only be freed of this by circumcision. It is this operation that definitively determines his sexual qualification and renders him fit to contract marriage.

[i.e., the surviving child of twins. -Analyst]

9. The Twins' Genie

845 776 Having twins is far from an unmixed blessing for Bambara women. Those whom I have seen afflicted with this good fortune and honor (for it is one, since it is regarded as /97/ a blessing from the Supreme Being, the Creator) have seemed to me greatly inconvenienced by their two babies. The healthier, stronger and more robust of the two relaxes pleasantly on the mother's back, while the one who needs a little care always gets his belly squashed on one shoulder or the other.

845 776 778 435 The genie of twins lives in a kind of hourglass made of two plates of braided grass; a bit of iron or wood onto which a piece of the umbilical cord has been rolled is hung from the centers. This fetish is called a sinsin and costs the father between 1 ba and 1 ba 200 cowrie shells (between 800 and 1200 cowrie shells, or 20 to 25 sous), not including, of course, the hens and kola nuts given to the sinsin tigi (1), more commonly called sinsin d'la tigi (2). To make this

1. Sinsin, the fetish bearing this name; tigi, "master," "owner."

2. Sinsin, the fetish; d'la, "maker"; tigi, "master," "He who manufactures the sinsin."

/98/ horror, which is hung in the entrance hut within an inverted gourd (1), one must own a father sinsin fetish and know the rites and

1. This gourd protects the sinsin from the teeth of rodents.

formulas.

A sacrifice to the sinsin is performed every year by the head of the family, who is himself its priest; the sacrifice continues to be made even in case of the death of the twins, because it is the

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778 peculiarity of this fetish that it continues to live in its hourglass as
778 long as a particle of this object remains.

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Young Bambara holding the sinsin, the fetish of twins

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431 This fetish protects the mother of the twins, and unites the latter in such close affection that one never receives a gift without sharing it with the other. I would even go so far as to say that it is in good taste never to offer anything to one without offering as much to the other, and when they are given something, the first to be favored is the last born, who is considered by everyone as the older.

845 778 431 If one of the twins dies early in life, as usually happens, the survivor receives a statuette which he keeps all his life with jealous care and to which he gives the name of the deceased. He dresses it to the best of his ability, often covers it with glass trinkets, such as bangles, beads, bits of amber, rings, etc., and well-bred people never give him a gift without adding at least 5 cowrie shells for the statuette.

845 778 825 The sinsin also grants twins a curious privilege. A scorpion not only cannot bite them, it is even at their service, and on their order will bite a fellow who has displeased them.

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A twins' doll.

845 551 It is easy to recognize twins (flani in Bambara) as they have special names, the commonest being Sinna, Maféné, Gno, and Ouassa. /99/

10. The Genie Protector of Villages

776 621 The genie protector of a village lives on a knoll or a rock; almost always, if not invariably, its home is a baobab or false cedar near the walls, in a little grove intersected by neat paths, well kept and often raked.

776 this sacrifice at length, for in the preceding chapter I stated the
796 function of the fetish; it may be imagined that the ladies and maidens
831 ask for whatever makes a woman strong and beautiful. Moreover, the indecent dances to which they abandon themselves under the sacred tree sufficiently reveal their inner thoughts. They have only one -- to show their breasts to the fetish and scratch their navels on its bark; in some villages custom demands this, and it is required of all. Young girls do it to develop their breasts, married women to become fertile, and all of them to be protected from the unpleasant accidents peculiar to their sex.

796 There is no festival without a feast and none without drinking, and the women offer the whole village sorghum gruel and beer for a drinking bout. They also offer kola nuts to all the elders and heads of families, and they know better than to withhold this treat from fathers, husbands, grown sons, older brothers, and those they love.

The Sinsin, the Special Twin's Fetish

782 The sacrifice to a sinsin is made on the umbilical cord which
845 is hung in the center of plates of woven grass that constitute the
778 fetish. Each plate belongs to one of the twins and even bears his
852 name. The sacrifices in honor of this fetish are always double; for each child separately, the family offers /millet/ flour /115/ mixed with water, millet beer, a kola nut, and a hen.

845 This is strictly a family fetish; the father of the family is its
778 priest, and only the children and their parents are present at the
852 sacrifices. Everything is done in a quiet and happy intimacy, and although there may be a few drunkards here and there, there is never an orgy. Sacrifices to a sinsin are made very frequently to bring its blessing to the mother and children; they are also performed on all occasions of the slightest importance in the lives of the twins: when their hair is cut eight days after birth, at the tattooing festival, at circumcision, at marriage, etc. Once a year a more formal sacrifice is made; the women cook d'lo, the millet beer, and the

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852 old men and important people of the village, as well as friends, are invited to squat before the jugs and partake of the liquid refreshment.

The Dasiri Fetish, Protector of Villages

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621 The dasiri is the chief of all the gnena, or djine. In order that its worship may be better understood and that the reader may have an idea of the power of its priest, I must go into a few details which cannot help but throw some light on Bambara organization. Let us, for example, take a village that is being founded: we are present at the election of the priest of the dasiri, the gnéna-n-sonnaba; at the choice of the fetish tree and of the sacred animal, the genie's mount; at the enthroning of the sacrificer; and finally at the sacrifices.

Election of the priest

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[482] The population has grown, the surrounding land is exhausted, and a group of families must move out. The old men who are still lively and the youths full of strength and life take up their arms and fasten a dirty goatskin, a foroko of provisions, on their shoulders and scatter in the bush in search of less ungrateful soil. When they have found it they go back to their homes, and the council of family heads meets to choose a leader. This leader is really a priest, for his chief function is to sacrifice in a public and formal manner to the blonda ba sou (1), the shades of the great entry hut /116/, that is, to leaders

1. Blon, "entry hut"; da, "door," "doorsill"; ba, "great"; sou, "corpses," "shades."

and priests who, just like him, held the reins of power, and to the gnéna, genii, spirits, and fetishes, whence come his names of gnéna-n-sonna ("he who sacrifices to the gnéna fetishes") and gnéna-n-sonnaba ("great sacrificer of the gnéna fetishes"). He alone has the authority to sacrifice to all /these spirits/ in the name of all /the people/.

764 There is seldom a djansa for unmarried persons, and the corpse lying in the grave does not even get branches to protect it from the earth with which it is covered. Not having had children, the young man receives his live hen and the girl her egg.

Burials of Women Who Were Pregnant or Died in Childbirth

766 The death of a woman during pregnancy or while giving birth to her child stirs the whole female population. To appease the spirits, 845 drive away the gnâma, and protect the village from another misfortune of this kind, all the excised women go to cut branches of karité (Bassia parkii) or dogora. As soon as the deceased is carried to the grave, they burst out of the village, crying and weeping. Three times they go back toward the village, waving their branches, and call out "hou" three times in shouts that disturb and chill you.

At the edge of the grave, or most often in the grave itself, a [326] blacksmith -- the surgeon of the occasion -- removes the child, tells its sex, and lays it near the mother (2). During the operation the

2. If the deceased has already been delivered, the stillborn child is wrapped in the mother's mat. The operation is performed for one who has not been delivered, less to save the child's life than to spare the deceased the disgrace of the egg. A newborn child deprived of its mother is condemned to death. It is not strangled, of course, but no woman wants to give it her breast, and the little thing dies of hunger. If a woman were to nurse it out of compassion, the spirits and gnâma would take revenge by

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causing her own child to die. A mother who has lost her child may adopt an orphan and give it her breast.

766 crowd /226/ always withdraws, and the blacksmith remains alone
845 with his assistant. When the work is done, they wash their hands on the grave itself, and the operator makes the customary prayer: "Whether the wind comes from the east or the west, from the north or the south, etc.," (see above, p. 244).

5. Sacrifices to Fetishes on the Occasion of a Death

782 Although at the time of death there is no sacrifice to the soul
764 of the deceased nor to the shades of ancestors, blood flows neverthe-
778 less. It even flows in torrents for the Bambara are not satisfied with reddening the family boli; they stain with blood all the boli fetishes they believe to be guilty. Nor do initiates of the sects forget their deceased brothers, and for a friend who was initiated the same day as they themselves, they cannot refuse the boli a hen and a kola nut. If the deceased is the master of a fetish, its priest, or an influential person on its staff, all the initiates comply, and the sacrifice becomes general. The initiates do more; in the evening they take the god out of its temple, and all night long they mingle their wild animal shouts with the blasts of sacred horns and trumpets blown by heralds. The latter very often wear hideous horned masks on their heads and are dressed in cloaks of feathers.

761 Eighty times out of a hundred, death is attributed to a powerful
782 boli which is taking vengeance, punishing or rewarding, and in the
764 environs of Ségou the Komo, Nia, Kono, Nama, and Douga are the
778 ones who have the most deaths to their credit. When the murdering boli is known, the entire village is notified; the trousers, blouse and bed cover of the deceased, or the tafé (1) if it is a woman, are hung

1. Tafé: a rectangular piece of cloth which women wind around their bodies to cover themselves.